



# VLCT LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT

SERVING AND STRENGTHENING VERMONT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

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**Date** April 9, 2015

**To** Mayors, Selectpersons, Municipal Managers and Administrators, PACIF Contacts

**From** Steven Jeffrey, Executive Director, VLCT

**Re** House to Vote on Mandatory Teacher Binding Arbitration Today

The House of Representatives is very likely to vote today to mandate that all collective bargaining contracts between the teachers' union and elected school boards unresolved through voluntary negotiations be imposed by third party individuals through binding arbitration. It is likely to take the form of an amendment to [H.76](#), a bill on the House floor ready for final action.

**Please contact your representatives immediately by email** (their addresses can be found at <http://legislature.vermont.gov/people/search/2016>) **or by calling the Sergeant at Arms (802-828-2228) and leaving a message.**

- Urge them to oppose the loss of local control to determine the 80 percent of school budgets that are personnel costs.
- Urge them also to oppose the effort of the teachers' union to protect itself from the effects of school board efforts to control rising school education property taxes.
- Tell them that school spending caps cannot be reached when someone not responsible to the voters or the proposed state law capping school expenditures is making the decisions on a vast majority of the school budget.

VLCT is opposed to mandatory binding arbitration determining the wages, benefits, and working conditions of local government workers for two reasons. First, we strongly believe that the only outcome of expansion of compulsory binding arbitration to teachers and administrators will be to bring higher state property taxes without voter or even elected representatives having to make that decision. Contract impasse arbitration for public sector employment is an abrogation of democracy and governing. Local officials and our senators and representatives know all too well that governing means making the hard decisions, including occasionally even saying no to one side or the other. It also means suffering the consequences of not being able to make everyone happy.

The proposed amendment to H.76 would take the decisions of 80 percent of the school property taxes out of the hands of the governed and their elected representatives and turn them over to a "disinterested" individual. Arbitrators are chosen by agreement of both sides – labor and the school board or selectboard have to agree on who is going to set salaries and benefits. Arbitrators don't get paid for making the right decision or the hard decision. They only continue to get picked to arbitrate if they aren't crossed off the list by the employer for siding with the union too frequently or vice versa. The easiest decision for them is straight down the middle of the differences between the two sides.

The arbitrators need to stay to the middle to continue to be employed, even when times require a change in the direction of where union contracts are heading. The trajectory of salaries, benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment that needs to be changed when costs need to be curtailed will be the status quo if binding arbitration is imposed.

**Vermont League of Cities and Towns**

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